



November 15, 2017

From Your Conference Minister

Dear Friends,

In a twenty-four hour span I had two experiences that put the spirit of all that I hold dear about Thanksgiving into perspective once again. I share these two experiences with you to remind us all for which we are all thankful.



One late afternoon I was cooking supper when there was a knock at my door. I opened the door and there they stood: two young Mormon missionaries. I have to admit my first thought was, "I don't have time or energy for this." But something had me resist dismissing them quickly and closing the door. They told me that they had seen my welcome mat (it reads: Bless this home and all who enter) and stopped and knocked to ask if they could pray for me. I agreed and they prayed. We then started talking. I told them that when I lived in Boston (more years ago than I want to admit!) I worked for Franklin Covey (the day planner and life coach company that is owned by a Mormon) and that I had many Latter Day Saints friends and co-workers during that time. We spoke more about life and religion and how all of God's children need to find a way to live together peacefully. We spoke about that if we all lived the Golden Rule, our world we be so much closer to God's dream for our world. I asked them if they would like some water, they said yes, so I gave them two bottles of water. They asked if I would pray for them as they continued their mission. I was honored to be asked and once again we prayed together. As they were getting ready to leave, they asked if when they were back in the neighborhood and needed a friendly face if they could come back. I told them anytime and then they left.

This meeting was powerful for me. I, like many of us, have stereotypes about Mormon Missionaries. It reminded me that it is only when we step out of our preconceived notions do we allow room for God's spirit to show us a new way of being. It reminded me of how very different people long for the same thing in life. It reminded me how sacred it is when we follow God's lead in our lives and step out of our comfort zones.

The next morning, I was in the supermarket. The lines were long to check out. I picked a line and sighed as the man two carts ahead of me left his cart in line and dashed to get something else. He took so long that the woman in front of me had to move his cart so she could check out before he returned. The man returned clutching a bag of rice. As he was placing his items on the belt, he looked at a yellow pepper he had chosen, and then told the cashier he didn't want it. The cashier rang out his order. He opened his wallet, looked, and then looked into the cart to put something back. He grabbed the bag of rice. The cashier began on my order as he was still trying to leave. I stopped him and told the cashier to put the pepper and the rice onto my order and give it to him. She asked him if that was ok for him and he agreed. As he thanked me, I said, "When you are able to do so, do the same thing." He left. The cashier and I began to talk. She told me I was the second person to do this in her line that morning. I said, "There but for the grace of God go any of us."

I feel blessed that I can add \$5 to my grocery order and not think about it. I feel blessed because I can buy yellow or orange or red peppers because I like them better than green peppers and don't think about the fact that they cost double the amount than green peppers. I am thankful that the cashier asked the man if it was ok that I offered to buy those items for him.

I have been dreading this coming holiday season. I miss my Dad. He lived for the holidays. He loved cooking and decorating and entertaining and sharing the joy of the season. These two events reminded me that we all can share the joy of loved ones no longer with us as we reach out to share the abundance and blessings of God with those who cross our paths.

May your Thanksgiving overflow with God's blessings.

Blessings and love,
Marie

News from Around the Conference



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2017. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers. [Click here to download the entire 2017 prayer list.](#)

Week of November 19

- Pilgrimage UCC; Marietta, Georgia
- Woody Clark
- Myrtle Johnson
- Heidi Schuler
- Linda White

Week of November 26

- King's Chapel UCC; Alpine, Georgia
- Ashley Cleere
- Robert Johnson
- James Schwarzlose
- Irvin Whitley

Conference Transitions

- **Rev. Dr. Brice Thomas** was called to Holy Trinity Community Church in Nashville as Senior Pastor, beginning his ministry with the congregation at the beginning of September.
- Brookmeade Congregational Church in Nashville has a new ministry team as of October 1st. **Rev. Diane Tugel** is the supervising pastor, **Sarah Kientz** is the lead student pastor, and **Margaret Ernst** the student intern. They are already off and running and are contributing to the life of Brookmeade.
- **Ralph M. Thompson** is the new pastor of Howard Congregational UCC in Nashville, Tennessee.

Churches in Transition

- Virginia Highland Church, Atlanta GA; Garden of Grace, Columbia SC; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN

Associate Conference Minister Heather Fosburgh Bardole Ordained on Sunday, November 12

The Southeast Conference, in conjunction with Kirkwood United Church of Christ, ordained **Heather Fosburgh Bardole** into Christian Ministry during the congregation's worship service on Sunday, November 12, 2017.



Laying on of hands by clergy and the congregation



Assoc. Conf. Minister Heather and Interim Conf. Minister Marie



Charmaine Penn Johnson and Heather serving communion

News from our Local Congregations



Pilgrim Church offers a Free Little Library

Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC in Chattanooga has established a take a book, return a book, free book exchange. "The Free Little Library is a way to encourage our neighbors to share with each other their favorite books" said Rev. Williamson, "we encourage people to mark their favorite passage or slip a note of encouragement inside of the pages of the books they donate." The little library is a free service of the church. [Read more...](#)



Celebrate History at the Atlanta Music Festival on Nov. 18

The Atlanta Music Festival has significant historical roots in its namesake city as part of an effort by First Congregational Church a century ago to unite all Atlantans through music with what was then known as the "Atlanta Colored Music Festival." This year's festival will present music performed by two Atlanta University Center Choirs, the Meridian Chorale, and the First Church Chancel Choir. Tickets are only \$15. [Learn more on our website.](#)



Commissioning of Back Bay Mission Work Camp Team by Moderator Russ Mullins
Larry, Ted, Dick, Teri & Mark, Elaine & Bob, Rich, Mary, Martha, Bill, and Char

Pleasant Hill Community Church Sends Work Team to Back Bay

Back Bay Mission, a ministry of the United Church of Christ in Biloxi, MS, is welcoming a work team from Pleasant Hill Community Church this week. We look forward to hearing about their experience in a future newsletter!

Upper Room Fellowship Fall Potluck Supper

With 75 persons in attendance at Howard Congregational Church on October 21, 2017 there was a great gathering of our three Nashville-area UCC churches at the Upper Room UCC Fellowship Fall Potluck Supper! Following a shared meal together, an inspirational program occurred in the



beautiful sanctuary of Howard Congregational Church where the Howard Congregational Mass Choir offered glorious music and special guest speaker Josh Gibson (M.Div. from UCC-affiliated Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis) spoke on the topic "The Importance of Prayer & Daily Meditation on God's Word."

The Upper Room UCC Fellowship is an association of Nashville-area laypersons promoting prayer and daily meditation on God's Word via the UPPER ROOM daily devotional and the UCC's StillSpeaking daily devotional. The Upper Room UCC Fellowship also promotes the greater unity and fellowship of Nashville-area UCC churches via periodic potluck suppers, rotated among our three churches in Nashville: Brookmeade Congregational Church, Holy Trinity Community Church, and Howard Congregational Church.

The next potluck supper meeting of the Upper Room UCC Fellowship is in the Spring on May 19th @ 5:30 PM at Holy Trinity Community Church. Special Guest Speaker will be Rev. J.R. Finney, pastor at Covenant Community Church in Birmingham & current Moderator of the Southeast UCC Conference!

Training and Retreat Opportunities

Register Now for the Winter Youth Retreat at Blowing Rock!

The Winter Youth Retreat 2018 committee is excited to invite you to the retreat January 12-15th, 2018. Once again the youth will be gathering at the Blowing Rock Conference Center in Blowing Rock, North Carolina. The presenter this year will be Abbi Long and the musicians are Gravel & Silk – the will consider the theme "Am I Good?"



Church Resources for Active Shooters and Safety Threats

The tragic events of late remind us that life is precious and that evil has the potential to find us anywhere, even in houses of worship. Circumstances as these are never easy to discuss. And, despite these gun related tragedies, our politicians have proven to be unmoved time, and again, to offer up any solutions that have the potential to thwart the ability of certain individuals to obtain such weapons. Consequently, we are obligated to discuss the propensity for these situations to occur in our country, and in our congregations.

In the aftermath of these events, church leaders struggle for answers around church security. Among the tough questions asked are, "What can, or should, a church do to prepare for an event such as this? Should churches encourage their parishioners to be armed in the pews? Should the church hire armed security to guard their doors? How should congregants respond to an active shooter situation; lockdown in place, run, hide, fight?"

For several years, the Insurance Board has been providing free information and resources to churches and related ministries to inform them about relevant tools available to respond to these situations in the most appropriate ways possible. [Learn more on the Insurance Board website.](#)



In addition, Rehoboth Fellowship in Atlanta is offering Active Shooter Preparedness Training on Wednesday, November 29 at 7:00 p.m. This course is open to the public.

Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders

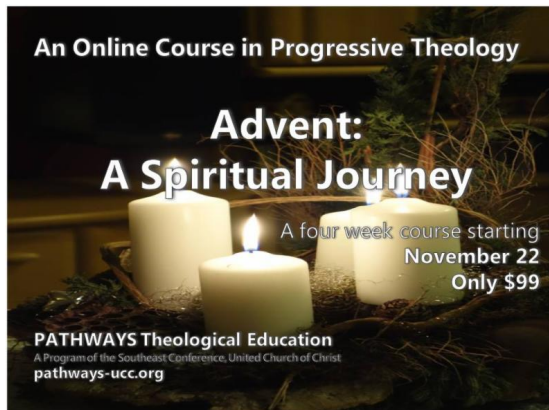
Sponsor: Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

Date: Monday-Friday, March 12-16, 2018

Host: Forest Lake Presbyterian Church

Location: Columbia, SC

This five-day training is intended to equip church leaders with the skills necessary to deal effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. It includes lectures, discussion, and guided practice in role plays. Active and practical in focus, the sessions emphasize hands-on skills training and real life role-plays, based on the types of conflicts faced by participants. This training is useful for pastors, lay leaders, judicatory staff, and others who serve with churches and church ministries. [Learn more.](#)



PATHWAYS Advent Course

You are invited to participate in an Explorer Course – Advent: A Spiritual Journey – beginning November 22. In this four-week course, through video presentation, meditation and discussion, we'll explore major themes of Advent: Waiting . . . Illuminating . . . Preparing . . . Longing.

Register today: <https://tasc21.net/pathways-courses/esc1-advent/>

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